

Sussex Beekeepers Association Brighton & Lewes Division



APRIL 2009

www.chelifer.com/bees

Divisional Diary Summer Programme 2009

Summer meetings are held at our divisional out-apiaries at Whitelands and Plumpton (downloadable maps available at www.chelifer.com), as well as at members' apiaries and those of other divisions; summer meetings are held on Saturdays and start at 2.30pm unless otherwise stated (bring a mug for tea and something to share to eat).

4th APRIL, Nick Lear, Knowlands Farm Granary, Barcombe, Lewes.

Health Check with Nick Withers, Seasonal Bee Inspector.

17th, 18th, 19th April, Stoneleigh, Spring Convention, Warwickshire.

18th APRIL, Whiteland's Pumping Station, Underhill Lane, Hassocks.

25th APRIL, West Sussex Bee Market and Auction, Brinsbury Agricultural College.

For more information check out web site. Info-AT-WSBA.org.uk

9th MAY, Heather Mc Niven's Garden Apiary, to include Frame Making.

SUN 17th MAY, Bee Market and Auction, Heathfield Community School (new venue).

11th 12th 13th June, South of England Show, Ardingly.

SUN 21st June, Bob Worthington's apiary, South Chailey.

TUE 23rd June, Committee Meeting, Ferrers Road, Lewes.

18th July, Disease Recognition and Microscopy Workshop with Alan Byham and Nick Withers,

United Reform Church Hall, Hassocks, 9.45 to 4.30

£5, to include tea / coffee / biscuits + Ploughman lunch.

15th August, Plumpton Apiary Wales Farm.

12th September, Whiteland's Pumping Station, Underhill Lane, Hassocks.

Occasionally Dates and Venue's do change - check out the diary/newsletter at chelifer.com

Non-members are welcome.

The Brighton & Lewes Division of the Sussex Beekeepers Association cannot accept any responsibility for loss, injury or damage sustained by persons in consequence of their participation in activities arranged

SWARM

We all like to hear tales about this favourite subject. Here's one from

Ken Stevens. Please send me your tale so we can all enjoy your anecdote.

drone in my fingers I called, "Would anyone like this bee?"

As there were no takers I said, "I'll have it then," and put it between my lips (the kindest and most useful place to put a queen at times!) A drone tickles more fiercely than a queen so I soon let it go.

Collecting and hiving swarms has brought me a great deal of joy in life. On one occasion a small crowd had collected on the 'safe' side of the street and seeing a man in bee clobber and carrying a smoker naturally assumed I must be an expert. So why not play to the public? Taking a

New swarm co-ordinator

Amanda Millar has taken over this duty from Lyn. Put your name on the list if you would like to acquire a swarm this way. Contact details in Officers of the Division.

Last months meeting – Amanda Miller

Plants for Bees 19th February 2009 by Monica Lucas

On Wednesday 18th February Monica kindly came from Chichester at short notice to give us an excellent talk well illustrated by her slides. She confined her talk mainly to cultivated herbaceous plants, many of which she grew herself in her large 1.25 acre garden.

She progressed through the calendar year appropriately starting with winter and bringing some examples in flower now.

The earliest are snowdrops and crocuses providing pollen and well worked by bees when the weather is suitable. The species crocuses eg *tommasinianus*, naturalise readily under trees. Hellebores, such as *H. foetidus*, and *H. orientalis* like sheltered shady spots and are ideal under deciduous trees, as are aconite. *Lonicera fragrantissima* can be trained up a trellis and is very fragrant and does well even on a north facing wall. This and other shrubby plants, such as Mahonia which has a long flowering period in winter and spring, are best pruned after flowering.

Winter flowering heathers can be planted in raised beds if the soil is rather alkaline, but *Erica carnea* and *E. darlyensis* are reasonably lime tolerant. Shear after flowering. Camellias can be grown in tubs, and dwarf azaleas which attract bumblebees. The willows produce nectar and pollen in spring.

With summer comes an abundance of flowering plants bees like such as the annual Poached egg plant *Limnanthus douglasii*, and the honey fragrant purple

Phacelia which is used as a green manure. Perennial wallflowers are attractive, not the modern varieties though, try Bowles Mauve (left) and a yellow one too (*Erysimum* "Bredon" ed). Monica tried Sea Kale (*Crambe cornifolia* which looked impressive but only attracted hoverflies. *Viburnum judii*, Oriental poppies, Iceland poppies, Lavender and Mignonette and Cosmos, Red (or yellow) Hot Pokers and single roses, the pictures all made one long for summer. Hardy Geraniums such as Mavis Simpson have a long flowering period but can be invasive.

In late summer and into autumn the Michaelmas daisies and Asters come into their own; *Aster amellus*, *Aster novi belgae* and *novae-angliae* and *Aster ericoides* Pink Cloud are worth trying. The latter can grow to 8 feet so is advisable to cut it down by half in May to get a shorter plant with more flowers. Finally everyone should have sedum.

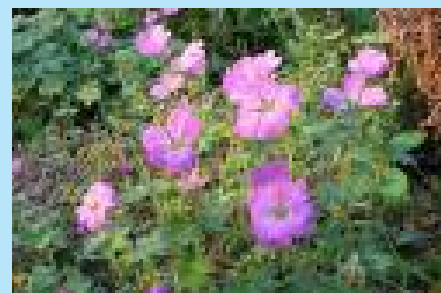
Monica thought that the use bees made of certain plants may depend on what else was flowering at the time. If oil seed rape is in flower they probably would not go anywhere else. Also the area of a particular plant made a difference, small isolated plants are less attractive to bees as it requires more work moving around, they like to concentrate on a particular flower and work it for some time. To that end Monica has large beds full of one plant such as Iceland poppy, or Asters, swathes of crocus under trees and a slide of thousands of snowdrops under trees. Not only does it look impressive but it is more efficient for the bees to work. It is not too late to do some planting and there is certainly time to think about some annuals now.



Icelandic poppy



Limnanthese douglasii Poached Egg plant



Geranium Mavis Simpson

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Food for thought – TRH

Being beekeepers we are a bit different from other people and some may see us as being nutters, we don't mind that, the difference being we have no fear of bees, in fact we like them, even at times we can be looked at as being a knight in shining armour for we can deal with a swarm that is bothering people and most importantly we can put their minds at ease if the bees have swarmed in their gardens.

At times I have been asked to deal with a swarm when the occupants are about to have a garden or wedding party in their garden, they say we have been here for some 15 years and the first garden party this happens, I tell them your problem comes under "Sods Law" but one can't help feeling for them, you can normally get away with boxing the swarm up and put them out of the way of the guests and pick them up later.

We used to get swarms in the middle of towns closing shops and part of that side of the street, the police were often involved and wanted them removed immediately. In that case it was best to give them a good spray with water, box them up, put them in the car and try to get someone to spray something smelly on the area where they had been to disguise the smell of the swarm, (hairspray, deodorant or the like) and get away as soon as you can before the scouting bees return looking for their swarm.

Some years ago the horse jumping at the Ardingly Agricultural Show was put in jeopardy when a swarm of bees flew over the grounds, stopping the event and scattering the spectators. A beekeeper Gerry Gaskoin had been helping in the bee tent, he acquired a box and went down to help, the police were keeping the

people away fearing they might get stung, being an ex teacher Gerry loved talking to people, he told the crowd that came to look why bees swarm what they and he was doing, he boxed them up and put them behind a tree for the police to tape off with a sign "Caution Honey Bees". Everyone was invited to visit the Bee Tent for a look round and a taste of honey. The police were happy as were the horse eventers, and the spectators, Gerry was happy as he had acquired a swarm for a beginner – all in all a job well done.

Sadly due to the lack of feral bees swarms are not now so plentiful. It is strange but the public don't seem to realize beekeeping is just our hobby and they don't understand we may want petrol money, they expect us to drive miles use our skill to capture the swarm, then drive back again in the evening to pick the swarm up. They wouldn't expect someone interested in chickens or roses or any other hobby come to that to drive over to sort out their problem. Quite often the swarm alights in a garden where the occupants relies and expects the council and government to do everything for them free. Saying that I do feel we have an obligation not to let honey bees cause a problem.

Beekeepers have a very interesting relationship with honey bees and have had so for hundreds of years, we like the bees, we like their honey, and tolerate their stings. The urge for the bees to sting us depends on how we handle them and the state of our mind, (they know if you have a fear of them) the interesting thing is they don't live long enough to ever get to know or like us come to that, they just tolerate us, they are just very important insects, as such they are not regarded by DEFRA as our pets but farm stock.

MARCH David Rudland – Preparing for the new season

It is unusual to have two meeting reports in the same newsletter but because the nature of the latest talk was relevant for the coming season it seems appropriate to include both.

David runs beekeeping courses and is currently running a ten week course at Plumpton. The preamble to the talk was to stress the need for strong colonies coming through the winter. To achieve this it is necessary to know what's happening in the colony over the colder months. Everyone talks about hefting the hive to establish the state of supplies but this can be unreliable depending on the distribution of stores in the hive. Most keepers do not open the hives in the colder months for fear of breaking the cluster and killing bees. Cold does not kill bees but verroa and starvation will!

Climate change is affecting the onset of brood, it is not unknown now for brood to be present all the year round. This also means that verroa numbers increase along with this extension.

Many keepers use organic acid as a verroa control, this is done during the winter months when no brood is present as the fumes won't penetrate sealed cells

where the mites multiply.

Bees have been known to starve even when stores are present but away from the cluster. Should this be the case then simply moving frames of stores next to the cluster will allow them to be utilised.

Verroa floors allow the keeper to monitor the extent of use of stores. Put the solid drawer in position for a couple of days and see where the debris falls to learn which frames are being used. You can also see how much verroa is present at the same time.

As the season progresses it is beneficial to arrange for a variety of pollen to be available so early flowering plants such as mahonia, crocus, snowdrop and sarcococca are very desirable.

April is a good time, once the bees are ready to produce wax, to use mechanical control of the verroa. There are two methods the "Bailey" change and the "Shook Swarm" the latter being the preferred method as this removes more verroa and many pathogens in the wax.

The method. Move hive to one side and replace with new brood box and clean frames, place Q excluder between floor and brood box. over...

Shake bees into new box, replace crown board, block up second hole if present and feed syrup. Once brood is present move QX to top of brood box.

The Bailey method can be found in many of the bee books but it can be difficult with larger frames than nationals.

Before attempting either method of change prepare the frames for replacement. If the foundation has been in the frames or you've had it in store from last season, it's a good idea to warm the wax gently. Just move it to a warmer place to soften a little, this releases the attractive smell and encourages rapid use.

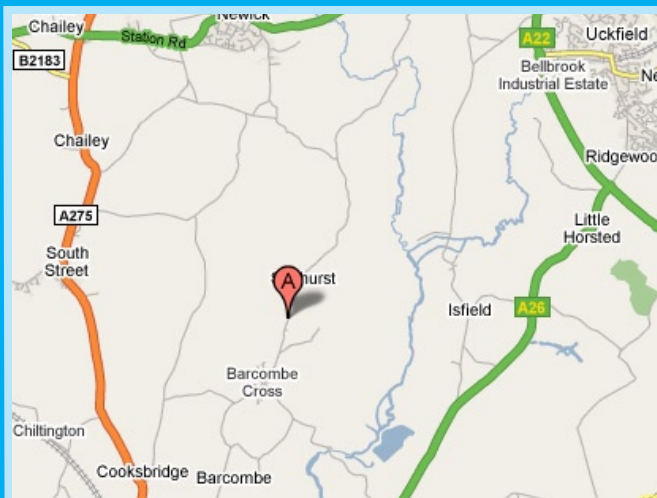
David warns to be alert during cold snaps, always check the level of stores and be prepared to feed

(syrup). Beware if weather suddenly warms up as you may find supers of syrup not honey.

Always remember to have space available for the queen to lay so put supers on before she runs out of space, this helps to restrict swarming.

Those who braved the elements to attend were rewarded with a concise and informative Climate change is affecting the onset of brood, it is not unknown now for brood to be present all the year round. This also means that varroa numbers increase along with this extension. Lecture and either reinforced their views or learned more about this tricky time of the season.
LR

Next meetings 4th and 18th April 2.30pm



We have two meetings this month the first being on Saturday the 4th April at Nick Lear's home apiary, Knowlands Farm Granary, Spithurst Road, Barcombe. BN8 5EF. 2.30 start. Nick bought two hives some six weeks ago and they need a health check, Nick Withers our seasonal Bee Inspector has agreed to come along and do this.

Second Meeting is to be at our Divisional apiary at Whiteland's Pumping Station, Underhill Lane, Hassocks, see web site for location, on the 18th. This is always a well supported meeting where our beginners get the opportunity to handle bees - sometimes for the first time. Look forward to seeing lots of you at either or both meetings. Lyn.
Guests and non-members welcome.

Sniffer bees New flying squad in war against terror

Terrorists, beware the ultimate sting: a British company has developed a device to detect explosives at airports with the help of specially trained honey bees.

In remarkable field trials completed this week, scientists have harnessed the insect's powerful sense of smell to track down samples of TNT, Semtex, gunpowder and other explosives hidden in shipments passing through a busy cargo airport.

According to the researchers, bees are able to detect the scent of explosives at concentrations as low as two parts per trillion. "It's the equivalent of finding a grain of sand in a swimming pool," said Rachael Carson, general manager of Inscentinel, the company behind the research.

"If you give them the smell, and then reward them with a sugar solution, they quickly make the association between the smell and the food," she said.

After training, bees will react to even the smallest trace of an explosive by extending their tongue-like proboscis in anticipation of food. "It's like Pavlov's dogs salivating at the sound of a bell," Ms Carson added.

Extract from Martin Hodgson article - The Independent. To read full article see:-

www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/sniffer-bees-new-flying-squad-in-war-against-terror-477173.html

Hive parts request

A beginner wishes to acquire National parts. If you have surplus bits and pieces please contact Sharon.
Email: batshall@aol.com or Tel: 01825 750733

Contributions to our newsletter

Contributions to the newsletter (max 900 words) can be sent preferably by email to the editor Email: lionel.r@talktalk.co.uk or by post to Lionel Reuben, Whincroft, Station Rd, Nth Chailey, BN8 4HG. Photos for the website should be emailed to our webmaster, Gerald Legg, Email: bees@chelifer.com

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